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AUTHOR Kim, Jeong-Ran
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ABSTRACT

This report provides a synopsis of findings from an interim report of an ongoing national study of Title I schoolwide programs conducted by the Laboratory for Student Success in conjunction with other Regional Educational Laboratories. The study is designed to develop a national database on program features, implementation requirements, and outcomes of Title I schoolwide projects in order to provide assistance to local schools with their own schoolwide projects. Initial findings from this study indicate that more effective schools are implementing the Title I schoolwide legislative expectations more faithfully than less effective schools. Teachers from more effective schools agreed that their schools were emphasizing high standards for all students and implementing instructional practices to promote academic achievement. Parent responses were not as favorable, with parents who speak a language other than English or are bilingual tending to rate the schools lower in most areas. Classroom observations indicate that students predominantly meet in large groups and are usually independently working on-task. The difference in instructional interaction time for more effective and less effective schools is not statistically significant. (Contains one figure and three references.) (SLD)

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Laboratory for Student Success,
Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory

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LSS Spotlight on Student Success

A digest of research from the Laboratory for Student Success No. 318

Implementation of Title I Schoolwide Projects and Their Impact on Schools

by
Jeong-Ran Kim

INTRODUCTION

This *Spotlight* provides a synopsis of findings from an interim report of an ongoing national study of Title I schoolwide programs. The study was initiated by the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) in collaboration with four other Regional Educational Laboratories: the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education.

The study is designed to develop a national database on program features, implementation requirements, and outcomes of Title I schoolwide projects; and to provide assistance to local schools to develop, demonstrate, and maintain a high degree of implementation of schoolwide projects that are effective in achieving student success in a variety of school settings across different geographic regions.

Among the major expected outcomes of this study is national data for: identifying state and local practices that are consistent with Title I legislative requirements; describing local practices that bring about a more coherent educational program for students served by Title I schoolwide project schools; and, perhaps most importantly, contributing to the much-needed procedural knowledge base for designing, establishing, and maintaining effective Title I schoolwide practices to significantly improve the capacity of schools to ensure students' learning success.

THE STUDY

Rationale and Context. A key provision of the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act mandates that rigorous national standards be applied to all students, including those receiving the Title I services. A second provision requires the expansion of Title I schoolwide programs to encourage high-poverty schools to allocate Title I resources with fewer restrictions in the service of student success. Taken together, these legislative changes have created both opportunities and challanges for high-poverty schools, including how to best use the flexibility to reduce fragmentation in the delivery of education and related services, and implementing policy reforms that support effective implementation of schoolwide programs. This study was initiated to examine and develop a systematic knowledge base on how to organize and sustain schoolwide programs that significantly improve the school's capacity to provide schooling success for children and youth from economically and educationally disadvantaged circumstances.

Study design. Because the primary interest of the study is documentation of what works, the first design consideration is how to identify a comparable pool of "more effective" and "less effective" Title I schoolwide program schools. Using a statistical model, school demographic and student achievement data were used to identify a pool of potential study sites. Final selection was made with input from district officials and staff willingness to participate in the study.

A multilevel and multidimensional framework based on a research synthesis on what helps students learn (Wang et al., 1993) was developed to guide the study's data collection and analysis tasks. Data collected included a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews to obtain implementation information from principals and teachers; classroom observation of teachers and students to obtain information on program implementation at the classroom level; focus group interviews with parents to assess the level of parents' understanding of schoolwide goals and their involvement in improving student achievement; and analysis of archival data from schools to examine patterns of student achievement and factors that impact on their achievement.

Initial Findings. This *Spotlight* focuses on findings addressing the question of how more effective and less effective schools differ in the level of implementation of the following legisla-

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tive expectation categories: (a) student performance goals; (b) content, performance, and assessment standards; (c) enriched curriculum and instructional strategies, including professional development; (d) flexibility and accountability; and (e) parent involvement.

School Characteristics. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) of the teachers' years of teaching experiences, graduate level courses taken, and highest education degree earned showed no significant differences in teacher characteristics between more effective schools and less effective schools.

Teacher Perceptions. Teachers rated all the implementation component and school climate scales above the mean, with teachers from more effective schools consistently rating scales higher. More effective schools show a statistically significantly higher level of implementation of legislative expectations on eight categories: student performance goals, standards/assessment, evaluation, enriched curriculum, student-centered instruction, cooperative learning instruction, resources, and parent involvement (see Figure 1). Teachers from more effective schools rated significantly higher on four of six school climate/governance scales: teacher/student relationships, colleague relationships, low school problems, and student attitude.

Parent Perceptions. Types of schools did not significantly affect parents' perception of schools, although parents from more effective schools rated all of the scales—except parents' perception of school resources—slightly higher than those from less effective schools. Parents who were bilingual (19.9%) or only spoke a foreign language at home (8.5%) consistently rated lower on most of the scales than those who spoke English only at home (69.6%), with three scales—student performance goals, principal leadership, and school problems—achieving statistical significance.

Classroom Observation. Among students in the study, there were statistically significant differences in terms of school setting and on-task behavior. Students from more effective and less effective schools worked in a large group setting over 60% of the time during observation. However, students from less effective schools were significantly more likely to work in a large group setting, while students from more effective schools spent significantly more time working in a small group setting. Students were predominantly on-task (over 80% of the time during observation), and students from more effective schools spent statistically significantly more time doing their on-task work. In terms of teacher observation, teachers from more effective schools spent significantly less time at their desks.

CONCLUSIONS

Initial findings from this study indicate that more effective schools are implementing the Title I schoolwide legislative expectations more faithfully than less effective schools. Teachers from more effective schools agreed more highly that: their school emphasizes high academic standards for all children; assessment is aligned with state content and performance standards; students are exposed to challenging subject matter; teachers use instructional time and resources effectively, with instructions tailored to individual student needs; resource allocation is flexible and adequate to meet the school and students needs; and school and parent work together to increase student performance. These teachers were more likely to agree: their relationships with students are very positive and encouraging; school problems are not serious; they emphasize ongoing student evaluation; and students are serious about their schoolwork.

Parent responses, however, do not replicate these findings, with parents who speak a language other than English or who are bilingual tending to rate most of the scales lower than English-speaking parents.

Classroom observations indicate that students predominantly meet in large groups, and are usually independently working on-task. Although teachers from more effective schools spend more time on instructional interaction, the difference is not statistically significant.

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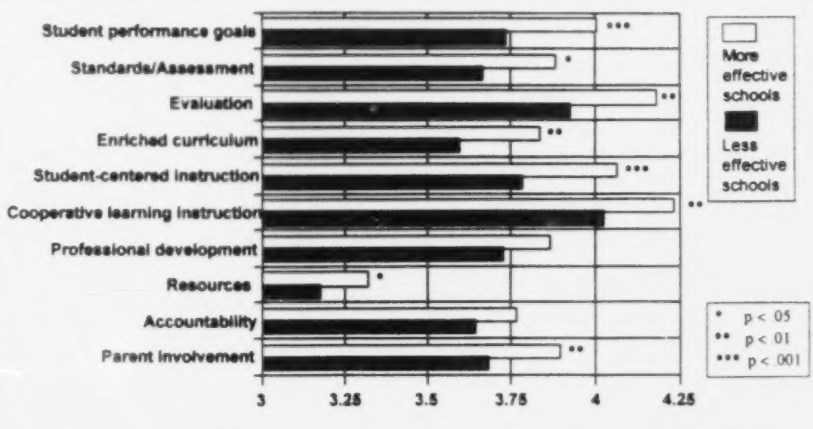
Figure 1: Level of Implementation of Legislative Expectations Between More Effective and Less Effective Schools Based on Teacher Survey



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